

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A collapsible structure comprising:
 - a plurality of pole members having top ends and bottom ends;
 - an upper hub member to which the top ends of the pole members are pivotally attached;
 - a lower hub member positioned beneath the upper hub member;
 - a plurality of strut members having inner and outer ends, the outer end of each strut member being pivotally attached to an pole member and the inner end of each strut member being pivotally attached to the lower hub member; and,
 - a flexible covering disposed upon and traversing between the pole members;
 - said structure being alternately disposable in a) a constructed configuration wherein the lower hub member is in abutment with the upper hub member and the flexible covering is drawn taut between the pole members and b) a collapsed configuration wherein the lower hub member is a spaced distance below the upper hub member, the pole members are closer together than they are when the structure is in its constructed configuration and the flexible covering is loosely disposed between the pole members.
2. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein hinged joints are formed the pole members between their upper and lower ends such that the pole members may be folded when the structure is in its collapsed configuration.

1 3. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the inner ends of the
2 strut members are elevated above the outer ends of the strut members when the structure
3 is in its constructed configuration, thereby exerting an upward bias on the lower hub
4 member and retaining the structure in its constructed configuration.

5 4. A collapsible structure according to Claim 3 wherein the application of
6 downward pressure on the upper hub member causes the inner ends of the strut members
7 to move to positions that are below the outer ends of the strut members, thereby
8 overcoming the upward bias on the lower hub member and allowing the structure to
9 transition to its collapsed configuration.

10 5. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 further comprising at least one
11 pull cord attached to the lower hub member and extending upwardly through the upper
12 hub member such that pulling on the pull cord pulls the lower hub member upwardly into
13 abutting contact with the upper hub member and causes the inner ends of the strut
14 members to elevate to positions that are above the outer ends of the strut members such
15 that the structure will be retained in its constructed configuration.

16 6. A collapsible structure according to Claim 5 wherein said at least one pull
17 cord comprises:

18 first and second pull cords that extend through openings formed at diametrically
19 opposing locations in the upper hub member such that pulling of the first and second pull
20 cords in opposite lateral directions will pull the lower hub member upwardly into abutting
21 contact with the upper hub member and will cause the inner ends of the strut members
22 to elevate to positions that are above the outer ends of the strut members such that the
23 structure will be retained in its constructed configuration.

1 7. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the flexible covering
2 comprises plastic sheet.

1 8. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the flexible covering
2 comprises woven fabric.

1 9. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the flexible cover is
2 attached to the strut members such that when the structure is in its constructed
3 configuration the strut members will support at least a portion of the flexible covering.

1 10. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the flexible cover is
2 attached to the strut members such that when the structure is in its constructed
3 configuration the strut members will support at least a portion of the flexible covering.

1 11. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein receiving channels are
2 formed in the flexible cover and the pole members extend through the receiving channels
3 such that the flexible cover is disposed upon and substantially supported by the pole
4 members when the structure is in its constructed configuration.

1 12. A collapsible structure according to Claim 11 wherein hinged joints are
2 formed in the pole members at locations between their top ends and their bottom ends and
3 wherein cut-out regions are formed in the receiving channels to facilitate folding of the pole
4 members at the hinged joints when the structure is in its collapsed configuration.

1 13. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the bottom ends of the

1 pole members are received within receiving tabs formed at the bottom of the flexible cover.

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3 14. A collapsible structure according to Claim 13 wherein the receiving tabs
4 comprise pockets of material attached to the flexible cover, each said pocket of material
5 having an opening into which the bottom end of a pole member is inserted.

1 15. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 wherein the pole members bow
2 to an arcuate configuration when the structure is in its constructed configuration.

3 16. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 further comprising an entry
4 opening formed in the flexible cover to permit entry into and exit from the interior of the
5 collapsible structure when it is in its constructed configuration.

1 17. A collapsible structure according to Claim 16 further comprising a flap that
2 is securable over the entry opening to close said entry opening when not in use.

1 18. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 further comprising at least one
2 opening in the flexible cover, said opening being covered by a removable panel.

1 19. A collapsible structure according the Claim 18 wherein the removable panel
2 is attached to the flexible cover by way of a zipper.

1 20. A multiple unit collapsible structure comprising a) at least two collapsible
2 structures according to Claim 18 in combination with b) at least one tunnel member that
3 has a first end and a second end and a passageway extending therethrough, the first end

1 of said tunnel member being attachable to an opening created by removal of the
2 removable panel from one collapsible structure and the second end of said tunnel member
3 being attachable to an opening created by removal of the removable panel from another
4 collapsible structure.

1 21. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 further comprising decorative
2 markings formed on the outside of the flexible cover.

1 22. A multiple unit collapsible structure according to Claim 20 further
2 comprising decorative markings formed on the outside of the flexible cover of at least
3 one of the collapsible structures.

1 23. A collapsible structure according to Claim 21 wherein the decorative
2 markings impart the appearance of an animal or insect to the collapsible structure when
3 in its constructed configuration.

1 24. A collapsible structure according to Claim 23 wherein an entry opening is
2 formed in at least one of the collapsible structures and the decorative markings create
3 the appearance of an open mouth about the entry opening.

1 25. A collapsible structure according to Claim 1 further comprising a locking
2 structure for mechanically locking the upper and lower hub members in substantially
3 fixed vertical positions relative to one another to hold the structure in its constructed
4 configuration.